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ABSTRACT

The 12 items listed in this annotated bibliography are entries in the ERIC system considered to be useful and significant publications on classroom discipline. The publications cited deal with discipline guidelines, assertive discipline programs, creative solutions to discipline problems, inservice programs, and discipline programs focusing on the causes of misbehavior. One research review and one study correlating teachers' pupil-control ideology and "classroom robustness" are cited. Other articles included focus on the disciplining of the handicapped, the importance of a common definition of discipline, the Glasser method of dealing with discipline problems, a parent-teacher open house concerning discipline, and on-campus suspension programs. (JM)

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THE BEST OF ERIC

ON EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Number 52, April 1980

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management

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Classroom Discipline

1 **Canter, Lee.** "Taking Charge of Student Behavior." *National Elementary Principal,* 58, 4 (June 1979), pp. 33-36, 41. EJ 203 097.

Discipline is a problem in today's schools, says Canter, because "teachers simply were not trained to deal with the behavior problems today's students present." One solution is to provide teachers with a sound training program in student management, such as the "Assertive Discipline Program" that Canter's educational consulting firm has developed.

Often, teachers are ineffective classroom managers because they lack the confidence necessary to "lay down the law in their classrooms," particularly with problem students. A host of misconceptions allows teachers to believe that some students are unable to behave. Yet Canter states bluntly that "all students can behave appropriately at school," despite neglectful parents, a bad neighborhood, or an educational handicap. The first step, then, toward assertive discipline is "for teachers to develop higher expectations of their own ability to deal with *all* students."

This kind of confidence can be gained by implementing the several disciplining guidelines outlined in this article. First, the teacher must learn to clearly communicate his or her expectations to the students regarding exactly what is and what is not allowed. The teacher must also set up a "systematic discipline plan" so that students know exactly what to expect if they misbehave one or more times. The key here is the consistency with which the rules of this plan are implemented. At the same time, appropriate behavior should be systematically rewarded with praise, other small rewards, or sending positive notes home.

Another important aspect of an assertive discipline program is its coordination with both the principal and the parents. Parents should be sent a copy of the discipline plan, and the principal and teacher should decide in advance what will be done with students sent to the principal's office.

2 **ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management,** *Classroom Discipline. Research Action Brief Number 5.* Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1979. 4 pages. ED 173 898.

As many educators know, the disciplining of adolescents is often more difficult than the disciplining of younger children. For this reason, it seems, few researchers have chosen to focus on the area of adolescent discipline. Of the research that has been done in this area, most has concentrated on the use of classical behavior modification techniques to control "inappropriate" behaviors. But there have also been encouraging results from other, more "humanistic" approaches to the discipline problem.

Behavior modification techniques are difficult to apply to teenagers because most adolescents are unresponsive to such rewards as teacher praise or the promise of good grades. But researchers have found one powerful motivator for this age group: "the promise of free time or early release from school." In one experiment, for example, completion of classwork earned tokens that were redeemable for early release on Fridays. The class rapidly began to complete classwork and earn tokens, while misbehavior dropped by 75 percent. "Thus a drop in misbehavior and a rise in academic performance went hand in hand," states this report.

Critics of this approach, however, believe that behaviorism affects only the symptoms of an underlying social ill; the problem may in fact get worse "while the pain is temporarily alleviated." What of self-discipline, they ask, and what of the goal of creating "independent, self-managing adults"?

One alternative approach discussed in this report is to train teachers in basic counseling skills, particularly those of effective listening and nonverbal cues. In one experiment, teachers trained in such techniques increased their communication with problem students, and behavior improved significantly.

Another interesting study found that discipline problems were much less severe in "alternative" high schools. The researchers hypothesized that the factors responsible were "the small size of the school, treatment of students as young adults, realistic attitudes toward student behavior, and informality, responsiveness, and understanding from teachers."

3 **Gil, Doron, and Heller, Philip S.** *Classroom Discipline: Toward a Diagnostic Model Integrating Teacher's Thoughts and Actions. Occasional Paper No. 13.* East Lansing, Michigan: Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University, 1978. 15 pages. ED 167 514.

According to Gil and Heller, there are four basic approaches to discipline: the permissive, the authoritarian, the behavioristic, and the diagnostic. The permissive, or laissez-faire approach, assumes that students are capable of disciplining themselves, whereas the authoritarian approach assumes the opposite—that student behavior must be dictated by an external authority or by rigid rules.

The behaviorist approach, quite popular among educators today, definitely is capable of managing behavior when applied correctly.

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But behaviorism has many faults, the authors emphasize, including the possibility that it may only be treating the symptoms and ignoring the causes of discipline problems.

A new approach to discipline, which has not yet been well developed, is the diagnostic model that the authors explain in this paper. Essentially, the diagnostic model views the teacher as a clinician who informally and objectively observes student behavior, makes a diagnosis as to why the student is misbehaving, and then provides the most appropriate treatment.

The emphasis in the model is on determining the underlying cause of the misbehavior, be it a reading deficiency, personal or interpersonal problems, or a family problem. Once the teacher has reasoned out the probable cause of the behavior, he or she can respond in an intelligent way, instead of blindly applying authoritarian or behaviorist techniques.

One advantage of this model is that it allows teachers to take a broader view of discipline and to begin to be able to help children with their personal problems. It also gives teachers insight into their own mental processes, resulting in better disciplinary decisions.

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4 "Guide to Sanity Saving Discipline." *Instructor*, 88, 4 (November 1978), pp. 59-61. EJ 190 978.

Several creative solutions to discipline problems are outlined in this excellent, multiauthored article. Lee Canter, author of *Assertive Discipline*, discusses his approach to discipline and its one important commandment: "Thou shalt not make a demand thou are not prepared to follow through upon."

Frederic Jones also emphasizes assertiveness, in particular the importance of proper body language in being assertive. Confronting a misbehaving student is like playing poker, says Jones, with both the student and the instructor raising the ante until one folds. With proper tone of voice, body position, and use of Jones's famous "steely glare," the instructor can always win at this game. "When children learn you follow through consistently, that you can't be undone, or faked out, they will quit testing you."

Another section of this seven-part article discusses how to handle those students who are chronic attention getters. The key is to allow such students to "show off" in a productive manner. For example, instead of constantly battling a student's attention-getting efforts, which often only adds fuel to the fire, the instructor might propose to help the student write a funny story to read to the class at some defined future time. For every two minutes of this kind of positive attention, state the authors, the teacher will save fifteen minutes of disruption.

Several other contributors—primarily school administrators and instructors—discuss their schools' successful approaches to discipline.

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5 **Jones, Frederic H.** "The Gentle Art of Classroom Discipline." *National Elementary Principal*, 58, 4 (June 1979), pp. 26-32. EJ 203 096.

"For decades," says Jones, "discipline has been a bad word in professional circles," largely because to most people it connotes only punishment. Even in teacher training programs at colleges and universities, classroom management techniques are rarely covered in any depth, the rationale being that teachers will "pick it up on the job." Thus few teachers, even experienced ones, are properly trained in the management of discipline problems.

One solution to this problem is an inservice training program in classroom management, such as the "Classroom Management Training Program" (CMTP) that Jones directs. Rather than training all teachers directly," CMTP uses a pyramid technique that relies on developing expertise in a few teachers and administrators, who then pass on the knowledge to their colleagues."

The most common method of student management is limit setting, or "consistently disallowing infractions of basic classroom rules." First, the instructor sets down a few "sensible, operational rules" for each lesson format that he or she is willing to consistently and quickly enforce. If, for example, a child is talking in class, the instructor faces the child squarely, says his or her name firmly, and looks him or her in the eye. If the child does not respond, the instructor goes through a set procedure of calmly but firmly approaching the child, and eyeballing him or her while only inches apart, if necessary. Jones's description of this latter technique is absolutely chilling.

Incentive systems can also be powerful disciplinary tools, particularly when they incorporate the element of peer pressure. In one such system, a "preferred activity" is planned at the end of a period of work. When students misbehave during the work period, the instructor clicks a stopwatch, raises it above his or her head, and announces to the class that the time for their preferred activity is being reduced by the misbehaving student.

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6 **Johnson, James R.** *Procedures for Teachers of the Severely Handicapped to Follow in Controlling Serious Behavior Problems within the Classroom. Change Episode Two.* La Verne, California: La Verne College, 1977. 78 pages. ED 165 396.

In 1977, a new federal law, the "Education of All Handicapped Children Act," became effective, making the states responsible for providing free, appropriate education for all handicapped individuals from ages three to twenty-one. The result of this law is that many autistic and severely handicapped children who were formerly housed in hospitals or kept at home are now attending public schools.

The main question now facing school administrators, says Johnson, is this: "What are the acceptable procedures teachers may use in controlling severe behavior problems within the confines of a class of severely handicapped children?" To answer this question, the Corona-Norco (California) Unified School District assembled a problem-solving group that included four teachers of handicapped children, a principal, one parent, and Johnson, then serving as the

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coordinator of special education. After a literature survey and a study of current practices within the district, a set of eight types of acceptable behavior control for use by classroom teachers was established, with particular attention paid to the legality of the approved techniques.

For example, "Planned Ignoring," "Loss of Privileges," and "Positive Reinforcement" are approved techniques when applied according to the defined procedures. Certain types of corporal punishment are also allowed, the most severe being a spanking. The procedures allow a spanking only when there is an adult witness and require that the details of the spanking be recorded in writing for the building principal and be reported verbally to the parents.

The approved procedures list is a great benefit for the teachers of the handicapped classes, reports Johnson, allowing them to easily explain the program to parents and get their written approval. At the same time, they know exactly what is and is not allowed, and they are confident that the defined procedures are fully in line with both administrative policy and state and federal laws. Included is a lengthy discussion of the literature on the disciplining of handicapped children.

7 **Kohut, Sylvester, Jr.** "Defining Discipline in the Classroom." *Action in Teacher Education,* 1, 2 (Fall-Winter 1978), pp. 11-15. EJ 197 172.

Since at least the beginning of this century, the controversy between traditional and humanistic approaches to discipline has raged, with first one viewpoint then the other gaining dominance. In the early 1900s, states Kohut, the "Progressive Education Movement challenged the traditional view of discipline with a more permissive and humanistic 'self-discipline' approach." This viewpoint was in turn attacked by traditionalists, and a back-to-basics approach was eventually restored.

In the 1960s, a new wave of humanism struck, with a resulting deluge of educational reforms and new approaches to classroom communication. Now the tide seems to be turning again, as traditionalists blame declining SAT scores and increased turmoil in the schools on the permissiveness of the humanistic approach. Today's classroom teachers, many of whom were students in the 1960s, are understandably confused and frustrated in their search for effective discipline guidelines. As a first step toward alleviating this confusion, Kohut encourages school personnel to define their ideas about discipline and compare them with their colleagues' conceptions.

To some educators, discipline is synonymous with classroom management. But classroom management is too broad a term, says Kohut, referring to virtually every interaction and activity that takes place in the classroom. Conversely, discipline is not just punishment. Rather, discipline refers to a two-dimensional system of training that involves both imposition by educators and the development of character and self-control by the individual student. Once a school's personnel have agreed on what discipline in the classroom should be, concludes Kohut, they can design an effective and consistent schoolwide discipline program.

8 **Lipman, Victor.** "Mr. Glasser's Gentle Rod." *American Education,* 14, 7 (August-September 1978), pp. 28-31. EJ 200 758.

Discipline without punishment? That's what the proponents of William Glasser's ideas are saying is not only possible but already a reality in many schools. Glasser, the author of *Schools Without Failure,* has taken some old ideas and organized them into a coherent plan for modifying student behavior.

The key to the Glasser method, says Lipman, is *involvement.* "Students cause problems because they are not *involved* with school. Teachers have little control because they are not *involved* with students." So the first step is to increase involvement with students by being personal, listening to students, and being their friend.

The next principle of the Glasser method is to "deal with present behavior." When students misbehave, ask them *what* they did, not *why* they did it, the latter inviting "a tangle of finger pointing and accusations." Also, don't dwell on past failures: "Reminding Tommy that this is the ninth time this month he has whacked someone with a ruler encourages a built-in fatalism, a sense that behavior cannot be changed."

After making the student aware of what he or she has done, get the student to make a value judgment about his or her behavior. "This may take some doing," Lipman admits, particularly getting some students to realize the wrongness of their actions. Once this is achieved, though, the teacher can help the student make a plan and a commitment to change that behavior. At all times, the adult and child work together instead of the adult handing down decisions. And even when the child fails, the teacher continues to express confidence that the child can do better next time.

Although proponents claim that punishment plays no part in the Glasser method, certain extreme actions have "natural consequences." The difference, according to Lipman, is that "punishment is often arbitrary and unexpected, but natural consequences come as no surprise."

9 **McLemore, William P.** "Make Contact Before There Is a Discipline Problem." *Action in Teacher Education,* 1, 2 (Fall-Winter 1978), pp. 37-40. EJ 197 174.

How can a teacher short-circuit classroom misbehavior before it occurs? One promising approach, outlined in this article, is for the teacher to hold an open house for parents, centered on the theme of classroom discipline.

McLemore recommends that teachers first discuss open house plans with the principal and get his or her approval. Next, the teacher should explain the open house to the students and their role in it. Invitations sent to parents by mail or carried by students should have a tear-off portion for the parents' responses, and parents who do not reply should be contacted by phone.

The open house itself might include name tags for parents, refreshments served by students, and a program of the hour's events. McLemore suggests that a guest speaker be invited—a teacher, principal, college professor, or school social worker—to give a short talk on the nature and importance of the school's discipline program. A question and answer period should follow.

The primary advantage of having such an open house is that "students will observe the teacher soliciting parental cooperation and support before a discipline problem occurs." Thus, the student will realize that if he or she should misbehave, there is a very good probability that the teacher will contact the parents.

After the open house, parent-teacher conferences should be held to further enhance communication between school and home. The teacher should listen attentively in these conferences, for in many cases the causes of a student's misbehavior will be revealed.

10 **Multhauf, Arleen P.; Willower, Donald J.; and Licata, Joseph W.** "Teacher Pupil-Control Ideology and Behavior and Classroom Environmental Robustness." *Elementary School Journal,* 79, 1 (September 1978), pp. 40-46. EJ 192 895.

Teachers' pupil-control ideologies can range from the humanistic or permissive at one extreme to the custodial or authoritarian at the other. Likewise, teachers' actual behaviors in the classroom can range over this same continuum, but an individual teacher's ideology may or may not match his or her behavior.

The question addressed in this study was whether a teacher's behavior (as perceived by students) and ideology correlated with the drama or excitement that elementary students felt in the classroom. The drama of school life, or its "environmental robustness" as the authors call it, was measured with a questionnaire administered to the 800 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders studied. Teacher behavior on a humanistic-custodial scale was indicated by students on another questionnaire, while the pupil-control ideologies of the seventeen female and fifteen male teachers were measured with a similar rating form administered to the teachers.

The researchers found, contrary to their expectations, that there was a strong correlation between the humanism in a teacher's pupil-control behavior and the robustness that students felt toward their school life. The authors speculate that "the leeway that humanistic teachers give students often leads to disorder and a higher level of conflict than is found in a more custodial classroom," thus giving a higher level of "drama" in the classroom.

In contrast to teacher behavior, there was no significant correlation between teacher ideology and classroom robustness. But when the data for male and female teachers were separated, it was found that each group had a significant but opposite correlation. For male teachers, the more custodial their ideology, the more robust students perceived their school life. For the female teachers, the opposite held true: a humanistic ideology correlated with a robust classroom.

11 **Usova, George M.** "Reducing Discipline Problems in the Elementary Schools: Approaches and Suggestions." *Education,* 99, 4 (Summer 1979), pp. 419-22. EJ 206 937.

The best methods of discipline, says Usova, are centered on the principle of "praise the good behavior and ignore the disruptive behavior." In the "RAID Approach," for example, Rules define each classroom activity, Approval is given to those children obeying the rules, children breaking the rules are Ignored, and Disapproval is expressed if the behavior is intolerable.

In a similar approach, called "Ignore and Praise," teachers are taught to "give descriptive praise related to the specific behavior" and to avoid giving "general or ambiguous praise." Disruptions in class are ignored, while good behavior is rewarded with tickets good for thirty minutes of free time in an activity room.

Another behaviorist approach is that of "educational self-management." Misbehaving children are asked to keep a record of their own behavior. If the child's record matches that of the teacher, the child is rewarded. The result of such self-assessment, says Usova, is that children become much more aware of their own behavior and as a result usually show great improvement in their behavior.

12 **Zimmerman, Jim, and Archbold, Lou Ann.** "On-Campus Suspension: What It Is and Why It Works." *NASSP Bulletin,* 63, 428 (September 1979), pp. 63-67. EJ 206 330.

On-Campus Suspension (OCS) is a program instituted at Hemet (California) Junior High School that keeps suspended students on campus rather than rewarding their misdeeds with a home suspension. An OCS program keeps students in a learning environment, state the authors, rather than at home watching television or causing trouble in the community. And in most districts, the money saved in average daily attendance money by keeping the students in school will pay for half or more of the suspension room teacher's salary for the year.

To set up an OCS program, a school needs only a classroom, some textbooks, "an innovative, sensitive teacher," and "a considerable amount of administrative support." Students referred to the program sign a contract stating the work they must complete before being allowed to return to their normal school routine. On the first day, students are given the Kudor Interest Inventory, and tests of math, English, and reading comprehension abilities. The Kudor test allows the teacher "to open various discussions with the student about likes and dislikes," which sometimes have resulted in needed changes in students' classes.

On the second day, students complete two hours each of reading and math and one hour of "values clarification." Students are kept in the suspension room for up to five days, depending on their infraction and their behavior and performance while in the suspension room.

The most important factor in ensuring proper student behavior in the suspension room, state the authors, is isolation from the rest of the student body.

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